

FREE HONG KONG

NEWS DIGEST

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First NSL case: jailed for a decade

Tong Ying-kit was sentenced to 9 years in jail for displaying a flag with the protest slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times".

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Civil groups disband under political pressure

Government pressures large unions and prominent NGOs into disbandment, *612 Humanitarian Relief Fund* to cease its operations.

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Tiananmen vigil organiser targeted by NSL police

The Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China was requested by national security police to provide membership information.

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Extra: District Councillor Receives Threat About 831

Former Rice Post reporter and current district councillor Leung Pak-kin received a threat on the eve of the second anniversary of the 831 incident. Leung posted images of a blade he was sent with a letter attached reading, "Stay silent on 831 to keep your family safe". Aug. 31, 2019 saw the police storm the Prince Edward station, brutally attacking passengers and protesters with batons and pepper spray. The incident resulted in the hospitalisation of 10 people and the arbitrary arrest of more than 60, some as young as 13 years old. [[Stand News](#) (in Chinese)]

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NATIONAL SECURITY LAW

First national security case: Tong Ying-kit jailed for 9 years

With no jury and three appointed judges, 24-year-old Tong Ying-kit was sentenced to 9 years in jail for incitement to secession and committing acts of terrors. The court judged that Tong committed the first charge under Article 21 of the NSL by displaying a flag with the slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times", which the court decided is a general call for separating Hong Kong from China. The slogan has been widely used during protests in Hong Kong during 2019-2020. The second charge was for driving a motorcycle into three police officers. Tong has filed an appeal over his conviction. [HKFP [1](#), [2](#)]

Five arrested for seditious children's books

In mid-July, two leaders and three members of the *General Union of Hong Kong Speech Therapists* were arrested by NSL officers for the colonial-era charge of sedition, by publishing and circulating three picture books about sheeps defending their village from invading wolves. The prosecutor alleged that the books were intended to incite hatred towards the government. The two leaders were denied bail. One month after the arrest, the government revoked the registration of the union. [SCMP; [Standard](#)]

Four student leaders arrested for advocating terrorism through mourning

Four students of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) were arrested by the national security police, for allegedly advocating terrorism in a motion to the student union to "express deep sadness" over the death of a man who attacked a

police officer on 1 July then committed suicide at the scene. All four students, aged 18-20, were denied bail and remanded in custody.

In July, the student leaders withdrew the motion, apologised, and resigned after receiving criticism from the government and university. Two weeks before the arrest, the HKU Council barred 32 students related to the motion from the campus, citing risks to the university. Law professor Eric Cheung Tat-ming quit the HKU council following the council's decision, saying the practice "breaches the due process stated in the procedures." [HKFP [1](#), [2](#), [SCMP](#)]

NSL office requested group behind annual 4 June candle vigil to provide information

The Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China received letters from the national security police that accused the alliance of being foreign agents. The letter requested information about the alliance's membership, finances and activities, stating failure to do so would risk fines and up to six months in jail. Founded in 1989, the alliance is the city's largest advocacy group for democracy in China, and is known for organising the annual 4 June candlelight vigil in Hong Kong. [HKFP, [Twitter](#)]

Reporter who filmed July 1 stabbing to be investigated by NSL office

National security police questioned a reporter who live-streamed the man who attacked a police officer on 1 July. The reporter is barred from leaving the city and has had her home searched. Police told the press that the reporter is subjected to a NSL investigation as a suspect. [HKFP]

Press freedom

Local news outlet leaves for Singapore in protest against NSL

In the wake of the national security law's shockwaves on the local media climate, news outlet Initium Media announced its move to Singapore, making it the first local media organisation to pull out of the city. Executive editor Susie Wu said in an open letter that “the road to freedom has grown more challenging” and assured its Chinese-speaking readers across the globe that they will continue to report on Hong Kong, China and Taiwan from their new headquarters in Singapore. [[Politiken](#); [HKFP](#)]

Freedom of assembly

Activists and ex-lawmakers admit to organising unauthorised assembly in 2019

Seven former lawmakers and pro-democracy activists have admitted to involvement in an unauthorized march that took place in October 2019. The defendants were charged with organizing the demonstration, and four also pleaded guilty to inciting others to take part in said march. The Civil Human Rights Front had applied for a “Letter of No Objection”, which the police denied, but the defendants decided to go ahead anyway. According to organisers, an estimated 350 000 people took part in the demonstration, which opposed an anti-mask law introduced earlier that month. [[SCMP](#)]

Freedom of association

Government and state media pressure unions and NGOs. Some announced to disband.

- The General Union of Hong Kong Speech Therapists (see page 3, para. 2)
- Civil Human Rights Front*
- Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China
- Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union*
- Hong Kong Journalists Association
- Law Society of Hong Kong
- Hong Kong Bar Association
- 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund*
... and many more...

► Organisers of Hong Kong's biggest protests announce disbandment

Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF), the democratic coalition that organised most of Hong Kong's mass marches, announced its disbandment on 15 August due to “unprecedented challenges”.

The Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office accused the CHRF of being “arrogant” and “hypocritical” in its disbandment statement. The Hong Kong Police Department acknowledged

CHRF's dissolution but said it would not absolve the group of any potential criminal liability.

As reported in previous issues, CHRF has been accused by the police as being an illegal organisation and was mulling disbandment ever since cancelling its plans to organise the 1 July protest this year.

Founded in 2002, CHRF has played a prominent role in Hong Kong's civic society, as the organiser of the annual 1 July protest to mark the handover to China. During the 2019 protests,

CHRF organized mass marches that drew as many as 2 million participants. [[CNN](#), [HKFP](#)]

The Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China has also decided to disband, according to sources citing a special meeting on 23 August. The alliance's leaders, Lee Cheuk-yan and Albert Ho, have been jailed for the 2019 protests, and its vice-leader Chow Hang-tung has been arrested for inciting others to participate in the Tiananmen commemoration on 4 June this year. [[HKFP](#)]

► **Largest teachers union disbanded after 48 years**

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (HKPTU, founded 1973), the largest teachers' union in Hong Kong said it would disband, days after it was criticised by Chinese state media and the city's Education Bureau severed ties, accusing the group of helping to infiltrate schools with politics. The union grabbed headlines at the end of July when China's state-run media outlets Xinhua news agency and the People's Daily condemned it as a "poisonous tumour" that must be eliminated. HKPTU represents more than 90% of Hong Kong's teachers. [[Reuters](#)]

► **Professional associations for journalists and lawyers targeted by state media**

Hong Kong Journalists Association (founded 1968), which aims at protecting journalists' rights and safeguarding press freedom, has been labelled by pro-Beijing mouthpiece *Wen Wei Po* as "anti-government political organisation" which defends "fake news". *Wen Wei Po* has also raised various allegations against individual journalists who sit at the association's leadership. [[HKFP](#)]

The Law Society of Hong Kong (founded 1907), a professional association for solicitors in Hong Kong performing a representative and regulatory role, was warned by the Chief Executive and Secretary for Justice to stay out of politics, a few days after China's state media *People's Daily* called on the group to 'stay professional' and not to follow the more outspoken *Hong Kong Bar Association*. These comments came a week before the society's election of five new council members. Subsequently, council member Jonathan Ross announced that he will withdraw as a re-elected candidate from the coming council election, citing safety fears for himself and his family. It was reported that if the 'liberal camp' candidates win all the five seats, they will gain a majority among the 20 council seats in the Law Society. On 24 August, five solicitors, who admitted that they had ties to Beijing's Liaison office in Hong Kong, won all the seats. [[Reuters](#), [HKFP](#), [RTHK](#)]

The equivalent professional association for barristers in Hong Kong, the *Hong Kong Bar Association* (founded 1948), has been labelled as "running rat" by *People's Daily*. Two council members in the Bar Association resigned in June and late July. [[Standard](#)]

► **612 Humanitarian Relief Fund to cease operations in October**

Enacted in 2019 to support arrested protesters financially, the *612 Humanitarian Relief Fund* announced it will close down by the end of October. The decision came after *The Alliance for True Democracy*, the organisation which manages the fund, became the latest in a line of pro-democracy organisations to announce their disbandment since the imposition of the national security law. Any money left over on the date of closure will be donated to charity, said former lawmaker Margaret Ng. [[HKFP](#)]

Freedom of expression

Artist-activist Kacey Wong leaves Hong Kong amid crackdown on dissent

Kacey Wong, a well-known political artist and activist, has left Hong Kong for Taiwan "in search of freedom of artistic expression". His previous work has featured heavy criticism of the Chinese government, leading to his name being mentioned in a hit piece by state-run newspaper Ta Kung Pao earlier this year. According to Wong, he made the final decision to leave back in January, following the arrest of 47 prominent pro-democracy figures (#NSL47). [[HKFP](#)]

Court clears corrupt conduct charge against singer in 2018 LegCo election

A Hong Kong judge cleared pro-democracy activist singer Anthony Wong of a charge of "corrupt conduct". Hong Kong's anti-corruption watchdog ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption) said that Wong had performed two songs for pro-democracy activist Au Nok-hin in a 2018 legislative by-election. According to ICAC, this performance provided "entertainment to induce others to vote" for Au Nok-hin. Anthony Wong's case comes amid a flurry of legal action against government critics, some of it under the national security law.

[[Reuters](#)]

SAVE12

Andy Li pleads guilty to collusion with foreign forces

Andy Li, one of the twelve Hong Kongers who were detained in China after attempting to flee to Taiwan last year, has admitted to colluding with foreign forces. The charge concerns Li's activism and association with Apple Daily founder Jimmy Lai and his aide Mark Simon, who have been accused of calling for foreign sanctions on China. Simon, now located in the US, has expressed concern that Li could be "making statements under great duress, with questionable legal representation". [[Taipei Times](#)]

As reported in Issue 2, Li's whereabouts since his return to Hong Kong had been unknown for days. It was later reported that he was held in solitary confinement at a notorious psychiatric center, but this could not be verified. [[SMH](#)]

New laws in Hong Kong

Beijing delays Hong Kong's anti-sanctions law

Following the passing of an anti-sanctions law by China's National People's Congress in June, Carrie Lam confirmed a version of the law will also be introduced in Hong Kong. This could put international companies in a difficult position where they must choose between complying with foreign sanctions against China, or risk facing visa denials, asset seizures and lawsuits in Chinese courts. The details as to when and how the law is to be implemented remain unclear.

[[HKFP](#)]

On 19 August, China's National People's Congress Standing Committee unexpectedly postponed a vote on the proposed anti-sanctions law to Hong Kong. Hong Kong's delegate to the meeting, Tam Yiu-chung, said Beijing wanted to continue to study the law. [[Bloomberg](#)]

Film censorship law to be amended for national security

Authorities announced plans on 24 August to amend the Film Censorship Ordinance, in order to forbid screenings of movies deemed contrary to national security. The changes would apply to films made in Hong Kong as well as those produced elsewhere. Older movies that were previously allowed to be screened could also have their approvals revoked. Violators could face up to three years in jail and a HKD\$1,000,000 fine. [[AP](#)]

Potential exit-ban law sparks travel alert from Canada

An amendment to the Immigration Ordinance that came into effect on 1 August has raised concerns that Hongkongers and foreigners alike could be at risk of being banned from leaving the city, similar to the so-called exit bans frequently used by China to control the movements of dissidents, as reported in Issue 3.

As a result, the Canada Travel Advisory issued a warning about the potential risks of travelling to Hong Kong under the new law. [[France24](#)]

Olympic audience arrested for booing the Chinese national anthem

A 40-year-old-man was arrested by the police for booing the Chinese national anthem while watching an Olympic event at a mall. This is the first arrest under the controversial national anthem law that was passed in June 2020, which was described as an odious bill by Amnesty International. The law criminalises any actions that insult the national anthem and can lead to up to 3 years in prison. Police said there is an ongoing investigation and more arrests may happen. [[HKFP](#); [Amnesty](#)]

Patriots ruling Hong Kong

One of the last democrats disqualified

The new election vetting committee decided to unseat lawmaker Cheng Chung-tai of Civic Passion on 26 August. The decision came into immediate effect, after the Committee on National Security announced that Cheng failed the loyalty test. As a result, Cheng will be barred from running in the Legislative Council (LegCo) election in December, and from the Election Committee. This leaves the pro-democracy camp with only one remaining LegCo member.

Cheng confirmed that during the vetting process, he was asked whether his past statements involved collusion with foreign powers. He said he “respected” the decision, adding that he believed there was no judicial procedure for him to challenge the disqualification.

The vetting panel, headed by Chief Secretary John Lee, is part of a multilayer screening system formed under the electoral overhaul as decreed by Beijing. [[HKFP](#)]

Pro-Beijing camp uncontested for new Election Committee

Pro-Beijing candidates are uncontested for most seats in the revamped Election Committee, to be voted for on 19 September. A majority of the sectors that are open for contest had the same number of candidates as the number of seats, suggesting coordination of nominations. Representation from sectors that used to have a bigger pro-democracy presence was diluted by the addition of ex-officio members.

The committee members who pass the loyalty test will be eligible to elect 40 seats in the revamped LegCo in December, and choose a new Chief Executive in 2022. [[Reuters](#)]

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

Taiwan may not attend Gay Games 2022 in Hong Kong due to security law

Taiwan will not send a team to next year's Gay Games in Hong Kong because of fears that their athletes and staff could be arrested if they wave the nation's flag or use its name. According to the president of the "Taiwan Gay Sport and Movement Association", there is no guarantee of a player's personal safety because of the national security law. Criticism against China by any athlete could be risky when the law applies to all nationalities. [[Focus Taiwan](#)]

Japan: Taiwan must never repeat Hong Kong experience

Former Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe expressed deep concern at China's activities in the Indo-Pacific at a meeting between Japanese, Taiwanese and US lawmakers. The meeting was held to discuss security issues in the region and to strengthen cooperation between the three countries. Abe said regarding Taiwan's future democratic development that "what happened in Hong Kong must never happen in Taiwan" and also called for Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization as an observer, despite China's previous opposition to the idea. [[Nikkei](#)]

US to offer temporary "Safe Haven" for Hongkongers in the country

President Joe Biden has signed a memorandum instructing the Department of Homeland Security to defer the removal of Hong Kong citizens currently located in the US for 18 months. China's "ongoing repression" and "assault on democracy, and rights and freedoms" is cited as the reason for the decision. Although no exact numbers have been given as to how many will be eligible to take advantage of the offer, thousands of Hongkongers are expected to be able to benefit. [[Financial Times](#)]

Latvian Occupation Museum cancelled 'Hong Kong Way' exhibition

Initiated by Iverson Ng, a Hong Kong-born Estonian columnist, the exhibition '1989 Baltics - 2019 Hong Kong' was to be displayed at The Museum of the Occupation of Latvia to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the historical moments of the Baltic Way and pay tribute to the Hong Kong Way. However, Taiga Kokneviča, the deputy director of the museum, withdrew from the foregoing without any communication and explanation. The director later explained that the exhibition was not fully agreed and there was a lack of understanding between both parties. [[LSM](#)]

CHINA IN THE WEST

China warns Lithuania over Taiwan's diplomatic office

China warned Lithuania not to "send the wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces" after Taiwan said it would open a de facto embassy in the Baltic country under the island's name. For the first time in the EU, the name "Taiwan" will be used. Lithuania has also quit China's 17+1 platform for dealing with Central and Eastern European countries, and has criticized Beijing for causing disunity among EU countries. [[Politico](#), [Reuters](#)]

China accused of cyber attack on Norwegian Parliament

Norway, along with several EU countries as well as the US, Japan, New Zealand, the UK and Canada, has accused China of being behind the cyberattack on Microsoft Exchange in the early spring of 2021. The attack affected Norway's legislature Stortingets email system. The Chinese embassy has now responded to the accusations, calling them baseless while insinuating that they are part of a larger coordinated effort to taint the country's reputation.

The embassy denies any involvement in the incident and asks that evidence proves the opposite is provided.

[[Aftenposten](#)]

Swiss PhD student's dismissal spotlights China's influence

A Swiss PhD student found himself in trouble with the University of St. Gallen after he posted tweets criticizing the Chinese government. The student's advisor reached out to him to inform him that she would no longer advise him, the reason being that she had received "angry emails from China" because of the tweets. When the student approached the administration for help, he was told he had de-registered some time ago and was therefore no longer connected to the university, despite having been instructed by the program manager to do so temporarily for practical reasons. St. Gallen's Vice President of External Relations said in a statement that the professor was justified in ending the advisory relationship with the student as the tweets "generated considerable discussion, and were perceived as racist".

The student decided not to continue his research on environmental pollution because of the incident, saying "I don't want to have to censor myself, certainly not in Switzerland". [[NZZ](#)]

Experts worry about Danish research illegally transferred to China

A top science researcher from Aalborg University was found to have made frequent visits to China for at least 5 years under the controversial program 1,000 Talents, sparking concerns over illegal knowledge transfer. The researcher held a title at the Wuhan University of Technology (WUT) from 2012-2017, although the university's laboratory addressed the researcher as an employee until February 2020. Experts believe the scope of the researcher's role should be investigated. Earlier in July, a researcher at the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) resigned with immediate effect after being found to have acted in violation of patent rules. [[Politiken](#) (1), (2)]

Table 1: Hong Kong 2019 Protest Movement Database

Item	Number of people	Last update	Sources						
Total arrested	10 260	30 Apr 2021	2						
Total charged	> 2600	30 Apr 2021	2						
Total charges over rioting (up to 10 years imprisonment)	750 (13-61 years old)	30 Apr 2021	1, 2						
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Found not guilty</td> <td>Pleaded guilty</td> <td>Found guilty</td> </tr> <tr> <td>27</td> <td>21</td> <td>15</td> </tr> </table>			Found not guilty	Pleaded guilty	Found guilty	27	21	15
	Found not guilty			Pleaded guilty	Found guilty				
	27			21	15				
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>No. of trials scheduled</td> <td>Scheduled until</td> </tr> <tr> <td>622</td> <td>Dec 2023</td> </tr> </table>	No. of trials scheduled	Scheduled until	622	Dec 2023					
No. of trials scheduled	Scheduled until								
622	Dec 2023								
Longest jail charges	12 years (Possession of explosives) 5 years and 6 months (Rioting)	30 Apr 2021	1						

[Sources: (1) [Stand News](#) (Chinese) (2) [HKCNEWS](#)]

Table 2: Hong Kong National Security Law Database

Item	Number of people	Last update	Sources						
Total arrested (Stated grounds of arrest for violating NSL)	123	20 Aug 2021	1						
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Secession & subversion</td> <td>83</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Terrorist Activities</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security</td> <td>14</td> </tr> </table>	Secession & subversion	83	Terrorist Activities	15	Collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security	14	20 Aug 2021	1
	Secession & subversion	83							
	Terrorist Activities	15							
Collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security	14								
<i>* Some arrestees have unknown charges.</i>									
Total charged violating NSL	67	20 Aug 2021	1						

[Sources: (1) [ChinaFile](#)]

IMPORTANT DATES

August - October 2021

- 31 Aug: 2 years since Prince Edward Station attack [[Guardian](#)]
- 9-19 Sept: Plea hearing and sentencing for unauthorised assembly, June 4th Candlelight Vigil 2020, against former lawmakers **Cyd Ho** and **Yeung Sum**. Pleaded guilty.
- 19 Sept: Election Committee election (1500 members for Chief Executive election)
- 23 Sept: **NSL47** committal proceedings
- 30 Sept: Mention of four arrested Apple Daily journalists for collusion with foreign forces: **Chan Pui-man, Fung Wai-kong, Lam Man-chung, Yeung Ching Kee**.
- 12 Oct: Hearing of Jimmy Lai for NSL charges over collusion and subversion and Conspiracy to pervert the course of justice
- 13 Oct: Closed pre-trial review for incitement of unauthorised assembly, June 4th Candlelight Vigil 2020: **Lee Cheuk-yan, Jimmy Lai, Wu Chi-wai, Gwyneth Ho**.

End of News Digest